

**STATEMENT OF ADAM WRONOWSKI
VICE-PRESIDENT
THAMES SHIPYARD & REPAIR CO., INC.
IN SUPPORT OF R.B. NO. 5289**

Sen. Maynard, Rep. Guerrero, ranking members and members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Adam Wronowski and I am Vice President of Thames Shipyard & Repair Company headquartered in New London, and I am submitting this testimony in support of Raised Bill No. 5289 AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT PORT AUTHORITY.

Thames Shipyard is a third generation family business started by my grandfather, John H. Wronowski in 1967. Our "North Yard" site located at the foot of Farnsworth Street dates back to the early 1900's as a commercial ship repair facility on New London's waterfront. Thames Shipyard is the largest commercial vessel repair facility in Connecticut and one of the largest in the Northeast. The importance of Thames Shipyard's impact as a vital regional facility located in Connecticut cannot be stressed enough as other shipyards in neighboring states have gone out of business over the past 10-15 years.

Thames Shipyard services vessels in many of the major ferry systems in the Northeast including the Wood's Hole, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority, Cross Sound Ferry, Block Island Express, Fishers Island Ferry, Bridgeport-Port Jefferson Ferry, and the Lewes, Delaware – Cape May, New Jersey Ferry. The shipyard also services the commercial tugboats in the region, vessels for the Army Corps of Engineers, commercial barges, commercial fishing vessels, and vessels for the Naval Submarine Base in Groton and Electric Boat Shipyard. The shipyard currently has over 90 employees and according to Connecticut's Deep Water Port Strategy Study is the largest non-cargo employer among the three deep water ports. We have seen growth in both our business and number of employees in the past five years. We are optimistic about the future of Thames Shipyard as the premier commercial ship repair facility in the Northeast.

The shipyard's main activities take place on two large floating drydocks which are used to haul vessels out of the water in order to perform repairs and maintenance on them. We recently completed a project to expand our Number 2 drydock and dredge around our facility in order to

service larger and deeper draft vessels. This work was largely funded through federal and State grants. Because of these capital improvements, Thames Shipyard secured a seven year, \$7 million contract to service and maintain the New York City Fire Department's fleet of fireboats. In fact, many of Thames Shipyard's customers are out-of-state interests. In other words, we are bringing in revenue from other states and using it to create and support Connecticut jobs.

We feel that the formation of the Connecticut Port Authority should protect and enhance commercial shipyard activities and ship repair services as recommended in the 2012 Connecticut's Deep Water Port Strategy Study. We also support the recommendations in the Study to "review the combined effects of the multiple local, regional, state, and federal requirements on this industry and streamline the regulatory processes for ship repair and shipbuilding." We feel a Connecticut Port Authority made up of entrepreneurial thinkers can play the role of advocate when dealing with local, State and federal agencies when dealing on regulatory issues and protect the industry in this State and the people whose livelihoods depend on employment in this business.

A Connecticut Port Authority can also be instrumental in identifying and helping to secure federal funding opportunities for commercial shipyards. Federal funding for shipyards is extremely competitive with hundreds of yards applying for a limited amount of funding each year. Funding is used for capital projects and large equipment purchases such as cranes and power washers used to clean vessel hulls.

With a clearly defined mission and properly assembled, the creation of a Connecticut Port Authority has the chance to greatly improve the maritime climate in the State, especially if members of the maritime industry are included in the Authority. A Connecticut Port Authority should be an advocate for commercial shipyards and the entire maritime community. A Port Authority must not create another layer of bureaucracy and regulations, which will do nothing more than stifle an industry that has the potential to become a significant economic generator for the State of Connecticut.